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MILITARY HISTORY JOURNAL

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**Remember Lessons of History. Strengthen
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No 6, June 88 (signed to press 20 May 88) pp 3-10

[Editorial: "Remember the Lessons of History.
Strengthen Combat Readiness in Every Possible Way"]

[Text] Some 47 years ago, on 22 June 1941, Nazi troops treacherously invaded Soviet territory, having disrupted the peaceful life of the Soviet people. The Great Patriotic War had started. In the history of our motherland, this takes up particular pages showing the heroism and courage of the people and their Armed Forces who were defending the socialist fatherland against an enemy which was aiming not only to capture enormous territories and economic wealth in the nation but primarily to eliminate the Soviet state and social system.

The initial period of the Great Patriotic War was particularly hard for us due to the unfavorably developing conditions. On the side of the aggressor were material superiority, combat experience and the surprise factor. Also felt were the errors made in determining the possible time of Germany's attack on the Soviet Union and oversights in preparing to repulse the first Wehrmacht strikes. The surprise invasion by the Nazi troops prevented the completion of the strategic deployment of the Army and Navy by the start of military operations and, in employing the available significant forces, to organize the planned groupings. As a result, the actual balance of forces in the first echelons was in favor of the enemy. On a number of sectors the enemy surpassed the Soviet troops by 3- or 4-fold. On the axes of its main thrusts, superiority was even higher and this made it possible for the Nazi troops to seize the strategic initiative and temporarily occupy significant territory. Significant efforts were required by the Communist Party, the entire Soviet people and their Armed Forces in order to surmount the enormous difficulties caused by the severe consequences of the aggressor's surprise attack.

The harsh lessons of the initial period of the war teach one the value of the greatest vigilance, the constant monitoring of the military preparations of a probable aggressor, ensuring a parity of forces and the greatest possible strengthening of the might and combat readiness of the troops and naval forces.

Recently by the "efforts" of a number of writers, journalists and historians, the initial period of the Great Patriotic War, contrary to historical reliability and the archival documents, has been turned from something severe into something "tragic" and basically associated with the words "failure," "confusion" and "disorder."

For millions of people, particularly among the youth, all of this creates an incorrect notion of what was actually the case during the first months of the war.

It must not be forgotten that even in border engagements and battles, Soviet troops, at times at the cost of their lives, honorably defended each inch of homeland. And precisely at the start of the war there appeared those commanders who subsequently led the fronts and armies to victory.

For example, in these difficult conditions, the talent of the commander of the IX Mechanized Corps, Maj Gen K.K. Rokossovskiy, the commander of the 28th Tank Division, Col I.D. Chernyakhovskiy, the chief of the operations section of the Southwestern Front, Col I.Kh. Bagramyan, and many other generals and officers became fully felt.

The archival documents also show the able and heroic actions of the troops. For example, on 24 and 25 June, 1941, the summaries of the German Supreme High Command state: "In front of Army Group South, the enemy is fighting particularly fiercely and stubbornly.... The enemy is moving up reserves from the Zhitomir section and again and again is attacking our 1st Panzer Group with strong tank support." On the next day, the OKW Staff reported to Hitler: "Fierce fighting is continuing. The enemy has again gone over to the counter-offensive with tank support, concentrating efforts against the advancing wedge of the 1st Panzer Group."

One of the documents of the Nazi 293d Infantry Division concerning the fighting in the Brest Fortified Area pointed out: "Officers were always at the head of the garrison. The officers and soldiers fought to the last minute. It also happened that our soldiers, in entering destroyed pillboxes, still came under fire. Demands to surrender passed on through a translator before the detonating of the pillboxes had no effect." Even modern bourgeois military historians who endeavor to falsify and distort the events of the Great Patriotic War, under the influence of irrefutable facts have been forced to respond respectfully about the actions of our troops. In the 4th volume of the work "The German Reich and World War II" recently published in the FRG, we read that "surrounded large Russian formations defended themselves fiercely and caused heavy losses to the approaching infantry units" and that even at the beginning of military operations the Red Army resistance constantly stiffened and "no fatigue of enemy manpower could be seen." This also is seen from the notes made by the Chief of the German Ground Forces Staff, Col. Gen. F. Halder, in his diary: "One must note the stubbornness of individual Russian formations in battle. There were instances when the pillbox garrisons blew themselves up along with the pillboxes refusing to surrender."¹ Five days later, the Nazi general made a very substantial note: "Information from the front confirms that everywhere the Russians are fighting to the last man."² It would be possible to give many such examples.

The history of the war teaches that particular examples from the past are important and useful only when they help see and understand the whole and when the properties of historical regularity are seen in them.

The Communist Party and the Soviet government, in anticipating the inevitability of a military clash with the forces of imperialism, prepared the country and the people for defense. Due to the advances in socialist construction, a powerful defense industry was quickly established and this made it possible to significantly increase the output of then-modern types of weapons and combat equipment. From the summer of 1940, the troops began receiving the world's best T-34 and KV tanks and new models of artillery and mortar weapons, including the famous "katushas" were developed. The new MiG-3, Il-1 and Yak-1 and Pe-2 aircraft in terms of their combat capabilities were as good as analogous models of the capitalist countries and for a number of indicators surpassed them.

By the end of 1940, the General Staff had worked out a new strategic deployment plan. The size of the USSR Armed Forces continued to grow and they were being technically reequipped. Major measures were energetically carried out to constitute reorganize units and formations. Thus, while on 1 September 1939, there were 25 rifle corps headquarters, 96 rifle divisions and 1 motorized rifle division, by the start of the Great Patriotic War there were already 62 rifle corps headquarters and 198 rifle divisions. In 1940, they began constituting tank and motorized divisions and these, as a rule, were incorporated in the mechanized corps being organized.

In June 1941, the Armed Forces had over 5,373,000 men, more than 67,000 field guns and mortars, 1,861 tanks and over 2,700 new type aircraft and 276 fighting ships of the main classes. The number of air regiments in the Air Forces had increased by more than 80 percent. The combat might of the Navy had risen significantly. Measures were being taken to develop air defenses as well as the airborne, engineer and other special troops.

Due to the fact that Nazi Germany had begun the strategic deployment of the Wehrmacht, the People's Commissariat of Defense and the General Staff began to carry out measures for the strategic deployment of Soviet troops in the west of the nation. From mid-May, they began to move four armies here from the interior military districts and at the same time another three were preparing to move. These seven field forces comprised the second strategic echelon.

Unfortunately, history gave us very little time. By the moment of the attack, not all the measures had been completely carried out and primarily the troops had not been promptly brought to full combat readiness and deployed in the appropriate operational sectors. This gave certain strategic advantages to the Nazi Army. On 22 June 1941, our motherland was strongly attacked by

the aggressor army numbering 5.5 million men and having over 4,000 tanks and assault guns, around 5,000 aircraft and over 47,000 guns and mortars.

Under the leadership of the Communist Party, all our people rose to the defense of the socialist fatherland. "When an enormous calamity befell our common home," pointed out M.S. Gorbachev, "the Soviet people did not hesitate, they did not flinch neither under the blows of the first setbacks and defeats or under the burden of millions of deaths, sufferings and hardships. From the very first day of the war they firmly believed in the coming victory."³

In considering the enormous importance of the experience and lessons of the last war, the CPSU Central Committee approved a decree for the writing of a 10-volume work "Velikaya Otechestvennaya vojna sovetskogo naroda" [The Great Patriotic War of the Soviet People]. Along with other tasks, it was to "overcome the speculation and subjectivism in the treatment of events and facts and show the true scale and reasons for the disaster which befell the nation in the initial period...."⁴

The materials of the ceremony honoring the 70th anniversary of Great October and the February (1988) Plenum of the Party Central Committee are the methodological basis for a correct and balanced understanding of the past events. The ideas and judgments contained in them act as a dependable guide in the development of historical science and in a correct and clear analysis of the past which is particularly essential now, at present, in order to see, understand and objectively assess and show how they worked, in what millions of people believed, how major mistakes were made along with the victories, the bright and tragic, the revolutionary enthusiasm of the masses and the violations of socialist legality, the heroic accomplishments of the people and the crimes against them. A scientific, Marxist view of history consists precisely in this. This is also its dialectical understanding. This principle must be followed also in assessing the activities and role of I.V. Stalin. Facts show that he did a good deal to strengthen the nation's defense capability and to develop the Army and Navy. To discard this from the accounts of history would mean to depart from historical truth. At the same time, it is also obvious that precisely Stalin made major errors in the reorganization of the Armed Forces. And of course "the guilt of Stalin like the guilt of his close circle to the party and the people for the committed mass repressions and illegality is enormous and unforgivable."^{4a}

In 1937-1938, three marshals of the Soviet Union out of the five were condemned and destroyed, all the commanders, the military council members and the chiefs of the political directorates of the military districts, a majority of the chiefs of the central directorates of the People's Commissariat of Defense, all four commanders, virtually all divisional and brigade commanders, around

one-half of the regimental commanders, around two-thirds of the military commissars of the regiments, many instructors at the higher and secondary military and military-political schools. Among the commanders and political workers who blamelessly lost their lives were such prominent military leaders as V.K. Blyukher, Ya.B. Gamarnik (who committed suicide), A.I. Yegorov, P.Ye. Dybenko, Ye.I. Kovtyukh, A.I. Kork, M.N. Tukhachevskiy, I.P. Uborevich, I.S. Unshlikht, I.F. Fedko, R.P. Eydeman, I.E. Yakir and others. Falling victim to illegal repressions were the Gens P.V. Rychagov who was the commander of the Red Army Air Forces, G.M. Shtern, the commander of National Air Defense, Ya.V. Smushkevich, chief Air Forces inspector and twice Hero of the Soviet Union. Gens K.A. Meretskov, K.K. Rokossovskiy and A.V. Gorbatov were repressed but then released. Repressions engulfed all military districts.

Historical experience shows that the further course of a war and often its outcome have depended largely upon the degree of readiness in which the armed forces of a state entered a war and what were the character and results of the initial stage of hostilities. In preparing the aggression, the enemy deployed along our Western frontiers some 70 percent of its formations (153 divisions) and all the troops of the satellite countries assigned for the attack, a total of 190 effective formations. Anticipation in the deployment of the armed forces provided Nazi Germany with a number of important strategic advantages. On the very first day of the war the German Air Force succeeded in causing severe harm to our aviation and winning air supremacy. This, in turn, further complicated the actions of the ground troops. The alerted cover forces, in coming under strikes by the ground and air enemy, were unable to take up the planned defensive areas and were forced to enter meeting engagements piecemeal and conduct defensive battles on unprepared lines.

The air strikes and saboteur-subversive actions by the enemy disrupted all elements of troop command. This left an impression on the nature of the initial operations, the course and results of which showed that the plans worked out in the prewar years for the combat employment of the troops, the system and dates of mobilization did not fully meet the conditions of the commenced war.

One of the reasons for the unfavorable outcome of the initial operations by the armies and fronts was the lack of combat experience among a large portion of the command and political personnel. The formations and operational field forces were headed by many young commanders and military leaders promoted to responsible positions directly before the war.

Educated by the Communist Party and having glorious combat traditions, the Soviet Army in moral and political terms stood immeasurably higher than the Nazi troops. Here the mass heroism of our men was not only of moral but also important strategic significance. The

enemy paid for each meter of captured land with enormous losses and a reduced rate of advance. The Soviet soldiers and commanders showed unprecedented steadfastness, having nullified the enemy's plan and having showed the ability not only to halt but also defeat the enemy.

Characteristically while in the wars against the Western European nations the Nazi Command succeeded not only in achieving the immediate strategic goals quickly but also gaining a decisive success, in the war against the USSR, it did not carry out the planned even in the war's initial period. No "lightning" victory was achieved.

In the prewar years, Soviet military science had drawn the sound conclusion that a war which might be started by the imperialists, regardless of the maneuvering nature, would become drawn out and require a maximum strain on all a state's material and spiritual forces. This made it possible to promptly determine the corresponding directions for the organizational development of the Army and Navy and prepare them and the nation as a whole for a war against the aggressor and lay down the bases for future victory.

The thwarting of the plans of the Nazis in the war against the USSR was a result of colossal-scale and crucially important activity by the Communist Party and the Soviet government in mobilizing the people and the army to repulse the enemy. The treacherous attack by Germany required a fundamental restructuring of the Soviet economy and this was carried out in an exceptionally short time, was of an organized nature and was marked by great efficiency. Thus, while in Germany the period of conversion to a wartime footing required around 7 years and 4 or 5 in the United States and England, the Soviet industry converted to defense production in 3 or 4 months and the entire national economy in approximately a year.

Under the conditions of the unabating, unaggressive aspirations of imperialism, the Soviet Union could not sacrifice the interests of its own security and the security of allies. This is why the warning of V.I. Lenin that "our steps to peace should be accompanied by a straining of all our military readiness,"⁵ did not lose its significance. In strict accord with Lenin's ideas on the defense of revolutionary victories, "the CPSU Central Committee and the Central Committee Politburo give unflagging attention to national defense capability and to the combat might of the USSR Armed Forces, and to the strengthening of military discipline."⁶ This necessitates the maintaining of high vigilance and constant readiness of the troops and naval forces to repel any aggression.

"Combat readiness is presently the main indicator for the quality status of the troops and naval forces," pointed out the USSR Minister of Defense, Army Gen D.T. Yazov. "It realizes the powerful combat potential of the Soviet Armed Forces which is a firm alloy of military skill and high technical equipping, ideological

steadfastness, organization and discipline on the part of the personnel and their loyalty to their patriotic and international duty. Precisely combat readiness accumulates the results of the diverse activities of the military personnel in the area of troop leadership."

The demands on combat readiness are steadily growing. The ongoing reduction in the time to carry out measures involving combat alert actions, mobilization and the readying of the troops and naval forces to carry out battle tasks is dictated by the minimum time necessary for the aggressor to launch the first attacks. The gaining of even several seconds now can be of great importance. Under these conditions, an increased role is played by the early working out of variations of plans and actions, high teamwork on the part of the duty shifts and the improving of the communications and warning system. The combat readiness of the Army and Navy should be quick, synchronized and adequate to any actions of a hostile nature by a potential enemy. Precisely this is what it means to carry out the demands of the CPSU on the Soviet Armed Forces, that is, to always be ready to repulse an aggressor.

Combat skill requires enormous daily effort by all the personnel. This can be seen from the experience of the units and subunits in the limited troop contingent carrying out their international duty in Afghanistan. An indispensable condition for achieving high combat readiness of the troops and naval forces is the greatest possible rise in the level of their field, air and sea skills. The principle of teaching the troops what is required in a war has been and remains fundamental in the practical activities in all levels of commanders and staffs. Here we have in mind not generally the process of the training and education of the commanders and staffs but rather their preparation to carry out those specific tasks which can arise at the start of a war in conducting defensive operations and battles. As before, combat readiness depends on the leadership level above the troops and naval forces. Of great importance for more fully utilizing their increased capabilities and for successfully carrying out the tasks confronting them are a further improvement in the command and control of the field forces and units, an increasing in the stability, effectiveness and cohesiveness of command and control, the ability to function effectively in a difficult situation as well as the mastery by the commanders and staffs of modern troop (naval force) leadership methods in preparing for combat and in the course of it.

The Great Patriotic War showed that the main thing in the activities of the commanders, staffs and political bodies is the ability to prepare quickly to carry out battle tasks and ensure dependable leadership of the troops and naval forces. This is possible only on the basis of realistic and careful planning, the organizing of uninterrupted communications and all-round support, as well as the prompt resupplying of personnel, weapons, combat equipment and materiel.

In comparison with previous wars, the command and staffs now possess significantly less time for organizing an operation and combat. At the same time the scope of the work involved in collecting the information, carrying out various sorts of calculations and issuing the tasks to the troops has substantially increased and continues to grow. The extensive introduction of automated systems and facilities makes it possible to free the command bodies from resolving many technical questions, and due to this additional time is released for analytical and creative work. At the same time, it is essential to bear in mind that even with a high level of automation, the main role in the command and control of the troops and naval forces as before is played by the commander while the staff, as before, is the main headquarters body. For this reason, an equally important concern continues to be the acquisition of skills by the commanders and staffs to quickly work out decisions, to set tasks intelligently and organize clear cooperation and complete support for combat.

The complexity and the responsibility of the tasks confronting the Armed Forces require an ongoing improvement in the style and methods of work of the military councils, commanders and staffs. In the report at the June (1987) Plenum of the CPSU Central Committee, Comrade M.S. Gorbachev particularly emphasized that at present, when we are moving toward major decisions, particularly important are scientific soundness, theoretical and ideological-political clarity in understanding the essence and main sense of the commenced changes as well as the trend in the restructuring of command and control.

The level of technical equipment available has always been and remains a most essential element determining the combat readiness of the troops and naval forces and is the material basis of their combat might. This is one of the main conditions for thwarting the enemy's intentions of achieving military-technical superiority and at the same time is a most important prerequisite for maintaining the combat readiness of the troops and naval forces on a high level.

At the present stage in the development of military affairs, one of the main factors in strengthening the country's defense capability is military science. Qualitative changes have occurred in it in recent years. The rich experience of the Great Patriotic War, the exercises and other measures relating to operational and combat training carried out in the postwar period in addition to the unprecedented growth in the strike force, fire power and mobility of the troops have made it possible to fundamentally revise many traditional ideas as well as work out new recommendations on the organizational development of the army and navy, the forms and methods of conducting armed combat and the readying of the Armed Forces to repel aggression. At present, the primary tasks are the strengthening of the links of theory and practice and the extensive involvement of all levels

of military personnel in scientific work. The commanders and staffs possess great opportunities for testing out in practice the scientific recommendations and at the same time have everything required on the basis of troop and naval experience to make their own contribution to the theoretical elaboration of present-day problems. Here it is essential to see to it that the results of the conducted research are promptly introduced into the life and activities of the troops.

Ensuring high combat readiness is inseparably linked with a strengthening of military discipline and this, being one of its component elements, permeates all the remaining factors. No question of combat readiness can be successfully resolved without high efficiency and organization and unswerving observance of the requirements of the military oath, regulations and orders.

The role of discipline has always been great, but now, in the age of nuclear weapons, it has immeasurably grown. All of this forces us to view with particular strictness and intolerance any deviations from the established provisions or tardiness and inaccuracy in carrying out the orders of commanders and superiors. At the same time, high exactingness should be combined with paternal concern for the servicemen. All party-political work in the Armed Forces is aimed at instilling these qualities. V.I. Lenin saw in this a powerful means for ensuring strong troop morale and for maintaining high combat readiness as well as one of the main conditions for achieving victory over the enemy. Proceeding from this, the political bodies, the party and Komsomol organizations should focus their efforts in developing in the men feelings of high personal responsibility for the combat readiness of the unit, ship or subunit. Party-political work must be conducted actively, effectively, flexibly and in close connection to the tasks being carried out and in the event of necessity it must be reorganized. For instilling moral steadfastness and a readiness for decisive actions and a feat in the soldiers and officers, it is essential to employ the vivid examples from the heroic past of our people, the combat traditions and the very rich frontline experience.

At present, the forms and methods of party-political work are changing as well as the methods of influencing the personnel in the aim of turning their spiritual and physical capabilities into a real driving force aimed at the successful achieving of positive results.

A restructuring of the awareness, psychology and style of activity of the military personnel, the party aktiv and each communist presently comprises one of the primary tasks. Without its successful resolution, it is impossible to count on increasing the effectiveness of party-political work and, consequently, on activating the individual and the human factor.

In resolving the designated questions, a special role is played by the command personnel, the main organizers of the training and education of the personnel. In the

Soviet Armed Forces, there are highly trained officers who possess the required moral-combat and pedagogical qualities. However, the demands placed on them are growing significantly faster than before. This is explained by the complexity and increased scope of the tasks confronting the Armed Forces and by the rapid development pace of weapons and combat equipment. This has required continuous changes in the methods of preparing and conducting operations and combat. Under present-day conditions, the complex and responsible task demand from each officer, admiral and general an irreproachable serving of the cause of the party and the people, high professional training, the ability to rally and lead the troop masses, to rely on the strength and authority of the party and Komsomol organizations, to constantly develop the initiative and energy of the servicemen and to support all useful initiatives.

The current stage in the life of the Soviet Armed Forces is a period of intense daily work to carry out the ideas of the 27th CPSU Congress and the subsequent party decisions. In the units and subunits a new moral-psychological atmosphere is being established and a firm course has been set toward restructuring, toward getting rid of the accumulated shortcomings, breaking the mechanism of inhibition, increasing the level of combat readiness, organization and order as well as strengthening military discipline.

Footnotes

1. F. Halder, "Voyennyy dnevnik" [Military Diary], Moscow, Voenizdat, Vol 3, Book 1, 1971, p 37.

2. Ibid., p 60.

3. M.S. Gorbachev, "Oktyabr i perestroyka: revolyutsiya prodolzhayetsya" [October and Restructuring: The Revolution Continues], Moscow, Politizdat, 1987, p 25.

4. *Voprosy istorii KPSS*, No 2, 1988, p 39.

4a. *Pravda*, 5 April 1988.

5. V.I. Lenin, PSS [Complete Collected Works], Vol 40, p 248.

6. "Materialy XXVII syezda KPSS" [Materials of the 27th CPSU Congress], Moscow, Politizdat, 1986, p 62.

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Initial Period of Great Patriotic War

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[Article, published under the heading "Debates and Discussions," by Lt Gen M.M. Kiryan, doctor of military sciences and professor: "The Initial Period of the Great Patriotic War"]

[Text] The initial period of the Great Patriotic War has always and continues to attract the attention of military researchers. This is quite natural since its results had a decisive impact on the entire course of military operations during the 1941 summer-autumn campaign. The unsuccessful outcome of the border engagements and the subsequent retreat by our troops brought the Soviet people innumerable hardships and deprivations and required colossal effort to achieve a fundamental about-face. For this reason it is very important to draw lessons from the failures and errors to avoid them in the future.

At the same time, this is also the least studied period of the war. Many documents relating to it are just being put into scholarly circulation and many of them have not been studied at all. It is clear that only in relying on documents is it possible to analyze and present a true picture of events of that difficult and complicated time and draw important generalizations.

The publication in VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL of articles dealing with various aspects of this problem and their subsequent discussion help in moving forward substantially toward the achieving of historical truth. In this context, we would like to take up certain questions of the concept of the initial period of the war as a whole.

By the initial period of a war, military history usually understands the time during which the belligerents fought with previously deployed groupings of armed forces to achieve the immediate tactical goals or to create advantageous conditions for committing the main forces to battle and for conducting subsequent operations. Simultaneously with this, the states, particularly those subjected to the aggression, usually carried out various measures relating to the mobilization and strategic deployment of the armed forces, they restructured the economy and mobilized all the nation's resources. For strengthening their international positions, foreign policy activities were intensified vis-a-vis the enemies, allies and neutral countries.¹

The term "initial period of a war" came to be used in the literature of the 1920s in the context of investigating the experience of the wars in the age of capitalism, and primarily World War I, the involvement of mass armies in these, and the necessity of quickly converting them from a peacetime status to a wartime one, as well as

concentration and strategic employment in the theaters of operations. On the basis of analyzing this experience, military specialists from different countries worked out all sorts of concepts of a future war. The appearance of new weapons brought about the rise of the theories of air and mechanized (tank) wars (Douhet, Fuller and others). In Germany, the doctrine of a "lightning war" became even further widespread and subsequently this became official in such countries as Italy and Japan. This underlay the Nazi aggressive plans in which the air forces and tank troops were given the main role. The Nazi Command was intending by rapid successive strikes to defeat Poland, France and Great Britain and then the strongest states of the world, the USSR and United States.

In order to ensure an advantage from the very start of military operations, Germany began establishing strong cover armies which included motor-mechanized formations and a significant amount of aviation capable of carrying out the functions of invasion forces which were to be employed to achieve the main goals of the war. Under unfavorable conditions, it was planned that the mobilization and deployment of additional (main) forces would be carried out under their cover.

The problems of the initial period were also investigated by Soviet military theorists. The theses of the RKKA [Worker-Peasant Red Army] Chief of Staff A.I. Yegorov, prepared for the USSR RVS [Revolutionary Military Council] in 1933 emphasized that "new weapons (aviation, mechanized and motorized formations, modernized cavalry, airborne troops and so forth) and their qualitative and quantitative growth pose in a new light the questions of the initial period of a war and the nature of modern operations."² Here also were clearly set out the tasks which could confront the opposing sides: the destruction of the enemy cover troops; the thwarting of its mobilization; the capture and destruction of material supplies; the capture and holding of strategically important areas; anticipating the enemy in deploying the main forces and seizing the strategic initiative. Particular attention was paid to air and mechanized troop operations.

M.N. Tukhachevskiy in the work "The Nature of Border Operations [operatsiy]" pointed out that the actions of the cover army would develop into a fierce large-scale border operation which had previously been the prerogative of the main forces. "...A border engagement," he wrote, "will be conducted not by the army main forces, as was the case in previous wars, but by special units, a separate forward army stationed in the border area."³ He also pointed out that the core of the forward army should be comprised of mechanized and cavalry formations maintained according to wartime establishments and stationed not more than 50-70 km from the frontier, in addition to aid formations located 150-200 km deep in the border zone.⁴

In considering the new trends of the imperialist states in preparing and conducting initial period military operations, Soviet military science worked out recommendations on preparing to repulse the enemy attack and these

basically came down to the following. Modern wars start by surprise, by treachery. Here the concentration and deployment of the invasion army as well as the mobilizing of the enemy main forces will be carried out gradually under various pretexts (courses, maneuvers, exercises and so forth). Hence, even in peacetime it is essential to establish powerful armed forces which are in constant combat readiness. The initial period, as before, will be the interval of time from the start of military operations to the entry of the main mass of armed forces into them. Its chief content will be a retaliatory strike against the aggressor invasion army with the forces of the border military districts (the cover army) which had been previously mobilized, deployed and brought to a high state of combat readiness. The border district troops in the course of the initial period will repulse the enemy attack and carry military actions into enemy territory with the simultaneous mobilization, concentration and deployment of the second strategic echelon, the Soviet Army main forces.

In accord with these views, during the prewar years, certain measures were carried out to ready the country and the Armed Forces to repulse a possible aggression, and in particular the strength of the Western border districts was significantly reinforced. However, a number of the provisions of the theory of an initial period did not fully consider the experience of the commenced World War II and the fact that Nazi Germany commenced operations against Poland and France with the main forces which had been mobilized and deployed in peacetime.

Soviet military theorists considered that a surprise attack by previously mobilized troops could produce the expected effect only in a war against a small state and for attacking the Soviet Union Germany would require a definite time to mobilize, concentrate and deploy its main forces. On this question MSU G.K. Zhukov (in January-July 1941, the chief of the General Staff) has written: "In working out the operational [operativnykh] plans in the spring of 1941, virtually no consideration was given to the particular features of conducting a modern war in its initial period. The People's Commissariat of Defense and the General Staff felt that a war between such major powers as Germany and the Soviet Union should begin according to the previously existing ideas: the main forces would be committed to battle several days after the border engagements. Nazi Germany in terms of the concentration and deployment times would be under the same conditions as we. In actuality, both the forces and the conditions were far from equal."⁵

The Nazi Command began shifting invasion troops to the Soviet frontier in July 1940. However, their main forces (113 divisions, including 31 panzer and motorized) were moved up and deployed in the forming-up areas over the period of 4 months preceding the war. The

redeployment to the east of an enormous mass of personnel, military equipment and materiel at this time was ensured by the high capabilities of rail transport which from 25 May began operating according to an accelerated wartime schedule.⁶

As a total for attacking the USSR, Nazi Germany together with its satellites deployed 190 formations, including 103 divisions, with 12 panzer in the first echelon.⁷ This made it possible to create powerful assault groupings on the main axes.

The deployment of the Soviet Armed Forces began to be carried out on a large scale only with the start of World War II. While in 1939, the Ground Troops had 98 divisions, in the spring of 1941, there were 303. On the territory of the Western border military districts there were 170 divisions and 2 brigades which together with the forces of the Northern, Red Banner Baltic and Black Sea Fleets and river flotillas comprised the first strategic echelon.

The second strategic echelon was to be made up of 7 armies (16th, 19th, 20th, 21st, 22d, 24th and 28th) and the moving up of these from the interior districts to the line of the Dnieper and the Western Dvina was to start from mid-May and was planned to be completed by 10 July 1941.

Thus, the Nazi Command succeeded in anticipating us in moving up and deploying the main forces as well as establish troop groupings surpassing ours by 4- or 5-fold on the major sectors.⁸

On 22 Jun 1941, Nazi Germany without a declaration of war attacked the Soviet Union. On the very first day the enemy committed 117 divisions to battle, and by the beginning of July their number had increased to 171. Over 20 formations assigned to reinforce the army groups were in the reserve. According to the Barbarossa Plan, the main thrusts of the Wehrmacht were aimed at Moscow, Leningrad and Kiev. The efforts of a separate army group were concentrated on each axis. During the very first hours, the cities of Riga, Ventspils, Liyepaya, Shyaulyay, Kaunas, Vilnius, Grodno, Lida, Volkovysk, Brest, Kobrin, Slonim, Baranovichi, Minsk, Bobruysk, Zhitomir, Kiev, Sevastopol and many other population points came under heavy bombing. German aviation unleashed fierce strikes against troops, command posts, airfields located in the frontier zone, ports and railroad junctions. The massed enemy strikes were parried by the organized moving up of the first echelon Soviet troops from the border districts to the state frontier but the aviation positioned at permanent airfields suffered almost irrecoverable losses.

As a result of the enemy surprise attack, the border district troops were unable to bring themselves to combat readiness, to deploy and take up the defensive lines assigned to them by the cover plan. At best in a majority of the divisions there was one regiment along the state

frontier while the main forces were 10-30 km away in the permanent positions. The combat equipment was in parking areas, as a rule, in mothballs. The divisions and regiments had one unit of fire of ammunition and one tank of fuel. The remaining supplies were stored at the army and district dumps. The artillery regiments of the rifle divisions and corps as well as the antiaircraft artillery, including the national air defense artillery, were concentrated in camps at planned training assemblies a significant distance away from their units and formations. For this reason the troops entered combat without proper artillery support and, as a rule, without an anti-aircraft artillery cover.

Regardless of the capturing of large territory, the enemy during the first 2 or 3 weeks of the war did not succeed in destroying the Soviet troops and thereby ensure unobstructed advance into the interior of the nation. In the course of the stubborn defensive engagements in the border areas, our troops caused the enemy great losses in personnel and equipment. According to the data of the German General Staff, by mid-July the Wehrmacht had lost more than 100,000 soldiers and officers on the Soviet-German Front, almost one-half of the initial number of tanks, while its aviation by 19 July had been deprived of around 1,280 aircraft.⁹ All of this brought about a decline in the force of the subsequent strikes and the rate of enemy advance. However, the Nazi armies were able to promptly replenish the losses in their formations drawing upon reserves and maintain their high combat capability.

Of the 170 Soviet divisions, 28 were out of commission (of them 12 rifle, 10 tank, 4 motorized and 2 cavalry) and over 70 had lost one-half their strength in personnel and combat equipment.¹⁰

During the retreat of the Soviet troops, the work of the organic and operational rear was disrupted. The enemy's capture of significant territory where there were almost 200 district and central dumps, deprived the units and formations of a large amount of stockpiled fuel, ammunition, weapons and other materiel. The medical battalions were not fully up to strength in terms of personnel and the required equipment in all divisions, and this had a negative effect on providing prompt skilled aid to the wounded.

The sharp decline in the strength of the operational [operativnoy] defenses was influenced by: the even distribution of forces along the front; the partial absence of second echelons and reserves; insufficient attention to the engineer organization of the defensive sectors and zones as well as to organizing cooperation and supporting the flanks; the great distance of the divisional and even the regimental artillery from the troops; the lack of combat experience among the command personnel.

By the end of the initial period of the war, the situation remained complex. Fighting was underway 120 km from Leningrad, in the Smolensk area and on the approaches

to Kiev. The enemy had created a direct threat of the capturing of these major administrative centers. The Soviet troops needed reinforcements in men and weapons. Of the 212 divisions and 3 rifle brigades in the operational army, only 90 were fully up to strength.¹¹

Thus, the initial period developed badly for the Soviet Armed Forces. They suffered a major defeat. One of the main reasons was in the unpreparedness of the border military districts to repel surprise enemy powerful panzer strikes, the unsuccessful positioning of the field forces and the grouping established under the cover plan.

The defensive of the Soviet troops was marked by high aggressiveness and was characterized by numerous counterstrikes and counterattacks undertaken by the front and army formations on the axes of advance of the main enemy groupings. However, due to poor preparations, the lack of air support and the rushed piecemeal commitment to battle, many counterstrikes ended unsuccessfully.

As a consequence of the incomplete deployment of our troops as well as due to the high rate of enemy advance, the Soviet armies were on the defensive in broad zones (from 100 to 210 km). Since there was no continuous front, it was impossible to establish sufficiently high force densities and the required depth of the operational configuration. Rifle corps went over to the defensive in a zone 50-100 km wide, for a division the figures were 15-35 km and in many instances up to 50 km. The defenses were organized without considering the possible use of such strong natural lines as major rivers and narrows between lakes which were unprepared in engineer terms. The fortified areas which were not occupied by field troops and were poorly equipped did not justify the hopes placed on them.

Due to the delay in the adopting of a plan, the formations and units, as a rule, could not retreat successfully. The enemy mobile groups outflanked them, depriving them of convenient routes of retreat and anticipating them in occupying the crossings; the continuous enemy air strikes disrupted the troops. Thus, the main reasons for the retreat behind the Dnieper and the subsequent defeat of the troops of the Southwestern and Southern Fronts on the Left Bank Ukraine were: the delayed pulling back of the units and formations to the line of the fortified areas running along the old Soviet frontier of 1939; the ineffectiveness of measures to eliminate the breakthrough by the German 1st Panzer Group formed in the course of the border engagements; the unsuccessful actions of the Bryansk Front as a consequence of which the enemy 2d Panzer Group and 2d Army came out in the rear of the Southwestern Front; the delayed decision of Hq SHC [Headquarters Supreme High Command] to pull the Soviet troops back from the Dnieper.

The loss of troop command and control, particularly on the Northwestern and Western Fronts, had an extremely negative impact on the course of the fighting. The

wagering on wire communications lines did not prove justified. The limited number of radios on the staffs and the inability of the command personnel to use them prevented the organizing of continuous radio communications operation. As a result of delayed and distorted information, the decisions taken by the front and army commanders often did not correspond to the situation. In addition to the common reasons for all the sectors, the loss of command and control in the west was also explained by the excessive distance of the staffs and command posts from the troops. In line with this, the collection and generalization of information were carried out slowly, the orders were late in being received and at times did not even reach the troops at all.

The continuous fighting (fighting during the day, a retreat at night, the regrouping and organizing of the defensive on new lines), and particularly the retreat, under conditions of bad logistic support fatigued the troops and this had a negative effect on their battleworthiness and morale. Not feeling the support of the adjacent units and fearing encirclement, the formations and units frequently abandoned their positions and retreated even if the enemy was advancing with equal or smaller forces.

As combat experience was gained and as party-political work strengthened the resistance of our troops stiffened. The Soviet Command was able to pull significant forces from under the thrust of the Nazi groupings and organize a strategic defensive. Simultaneously, the mobilizing and constituting of four reserve armies (19th, 20th, 21st and 22d) were accelerated and these were moved up to organize a strong defensive on the Moscow sector. For reinforcing the cover of Smolensk and Vyazma, the 24th and 28th Armies were moved up (the Smolensk Engagement of 1941 and the Vyazma Defensive Operation of 1941). On the southwestern sector, Hq SHC ordered the pullback of the Southern and Southwestern Fronts to a line of the old fortified areas prior to 9 July.

In mid-July, the strategic reserves were committed to battle. The resistance of the Soviet Army to the enemy increased sharply along the entire front. The Nazi troop offensive bogged down in the Baltic, at Leningrad and in Kiev. To the east of Smolensk, the enemy was tied down in extended fighting. By committing the main forces of the fronts and the large strategic reserves to battle, the Soviet Command promptly stabilized the situation on the main strategic sectors and checked the Nazi advance the rate of which dropped from 30 km a day during the first days of the war to 6-7 km in mid-July. Although the Nazi Army had defeated the Soviet troops in the border zone, the enemy's plans of an unobstructed advance to the most important political and industrial centers of the nation collapsed. At the end of July, Hitler was forced to order Army Group Center to go over to the defensive on the Moscow axis and make substantial adjustments in his plans. There were indications of a protracted war which was unexpected for the enemy leadership which had assumed that the campaign would be completed in several months.

The military successes of Nazi Germany were the result of the early mobilization of the armed forces and the restructuring of the economy and state apparatus prior to the start of the attack on the USSR. Its army also had 2 years of fighting experience. In addition, the political and ideological brainwashing of the population had been successfully carried out. Foreign policy efforts were aimed at strengthening the bloc of aggressive states.

In conclusion, it must be said that, although the surprise-attacking aggressor did achieve major operational-strategic results in the initial period of the war, its advantages were not of such paralyzing effect as on the other fronts of World War II. At the same time, there was a clear need for carrying out measures of a preparatory nature prior to the start of hostilities, including mobilization and strategic deployment of the armed forces for conducting the first operations. There were also trends for increasing the scale and decisiveness of combat, achieving significant results in the initial period capable of having a greater impact on the further course of the war and reducing the length of the initial period. While in the Russo-Japanese War this period lasted 5 months, in World War I it was 2 months, but in the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union approximately 3 weeks.

On the basis of the experience of the two world wars it can be concluded that the content, nature and duration of the initial period depend on the employed means of combat, the degree of readiness for the war and the methods of initiating it. This largely determined the particular features of the hostilities conducted in the initial period by the belligerents.

On the theoretical level it is very difficult to establish the content and time frames of the initial period of a war. Individual aspects characteristic of the initial period of previous wars may survive under present-day conditions, if only conventional weapons are employed. Proceeding from this, certain countries or coalitions of states even in peacetime maintain strong armed forces capable of immediately commencing combat with the most decisive goals.

With the surprise use of nuclear weapons, an aggressor may be able even in the very outset to achieve results capable of having a decisive impact on the course and even the outcome of a war. In order not to be caught by surprise and to avoid defeat, the USSR Armed Forces should be in constant high combat readiness and possess the ability to immediately undertake retaliatory actions for defeating the aggressor under various situational conditions.

The lessons of the Great Patriotic War show that the insufficiently profound theoretical elaboration of the problems of the initial period during the prewar years had a negative influence on the course of military operations at its start. In this context, under present-day

conditions, it is particularly urgent to thoroughly elaborate these problems on the basis of investigating the experience of previous as well as subsequent local wars and conflicts initiated by the imperialist states.

Footnotes

1. "Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya" [Soviet Military Encyclopedia], Moscow, Voenizdat, Vol 5, 1978, pp 554-555.

2. A.I. Yegorov, "Tactics and Operational Art of the RKKA in the Start of the 1930s," in the book: "Voprosy strategii i operativnogo iskusstva v sovetskikh voyennykh trudakh (1917-1940 gg.)" [Questions of Strategy and Operational Art in Soviet Military Works (1917-1940)], Moscow, Voenizdat, 1965, p 377.

3. M.I. Tukhachevskiy, "Izbrannyye proizvedeniya" [Selected Works], Moscow, Voenizdat, Vol 2, 1964, p 217.

4. Ibid., pp 216-219.

5. G.K. Zhukov, "Vospominaniya i razmyshleniya" [Recollections and Reflections], Izd-vo APN, Vol 1, 1986, pp 275-276.

6. "Nachalnyy period voyny" [The Initial Period of a War], Moscow, Voenizdat, 1974, p 188.

7. "Istoriya vtoroy mirovoy voyny 1939-1945" [History of World War II of 1939-1945], Moscow, Voenizdat, Vol 4, 1975, p 27.

8. "Nachalnyy period voyny," pp 207, 211, 215.

9. "Mirovaya voyna 1939-1945. Sbornik statey" [The World War of 1939-1945. Collection of Articles], Moscow, Izd-vo Inostrannoy Literatury, 1957, p 472; F. Halder, "Voyennyi dnevnik" [Military Diary], translated from the German, Moscow, Voenizdat, Vol 3, Book 1, 1971, p 148.

10. "Velikaya Otechestvennaya voyna Sovetskogo Soyuza 1941-1945. Kratkaya istoriya" [The Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union of 1941-1945. Concise History], Moscow, Voenizdat, 1984, p 63.

11. "Istoriya vtoroy mirovoy..., " Vol 4, p 60.

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Deployment of Operational Rear in Initial Period of War

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[Article by Col Gen G.P. Pastukhovskiy: "Deployment of the Operational [Operativnogo] Rear in the Initial Period of the War"]

[Text] The article "On Certain Problems in Preparing the Country and the Armed Forces to Repel Nazi Aggression" published in the April issue of the journal this year raised important little-investigated questions of the preparation of the Armed Forces to repel the Nazi attack on the Soviet Union and the conduct of combat operations [deystviy] by the Soviet troops in the initial period of the Great Patriotic War. Since one of the reasons for the setbacks of our troops in the initial period of the war was the unsatisfactory rear support, in the current article we would like to take up the carrying out of the tasks of the preparation and configuration of the operational [operativnogo] rear in the prewar years as well as deal with certain problems of its mobilization and deployment.

Preparation of the rear services in the prewar years. In being guided by the instructions of V.I. Lenin that "for waging war truly it is essential to have a strong, organized rear,"¹ the Communist Party in a short historical period turned our country into an advanced industrial-kolkhoz power. Under its leadership the Soviet people during the years of the prewar five-year plans created a military economic base which supplied the Red Army and Navy with combat equipment, weapons, ammunition, fuel, food and all other logistic supplies. Over the 3 years of the Third Five-Year Plan, for example, the average annual increase in defense products was 39 percent, while the increase in the product of all industry equaled 13 percent.² Also of important defense significance was the accelerated development of an industrial base in the eastern regions of the country, the fundamental technical reconstruction of all types of transport, the creating of state reserves of strategic raw materials and the stockpiling of the basic types of materiel.

On the basis of the integrated development of the socialist economy, the rear services of the Red Army were strengthened and improved, their organizational structure was strengthened and level of equipment supply increased. By the start of the war, rear bodies had been established in the center, the military districts (the fleets) and in the formations and units. The main supply base of the troops in peacetime was the district permanent rear and this included the units and facilities of all the main supply and support services. However in the operational [operativnom] and tactical [(immediate)

voyskovom] rear, the units and facilities were maintained in an extremely limited number proceeding from the need to meet the requirements of the peacetime troops as well as maintain the mobilization and emergency supplies of materiel.

The questions of supporting the troops during the initial period had not been posed either theoretically or practically for the operational [operativnogo] rear in peacetime. It was felt that the start of a war would be preceded by a threatening period (or a special period at its start) and during this time the front and army rear services could be deployed on a planned basis.³ This, as is known, was not to be the case. The formations, units and facilities had to mobilize in the course of military operations which commenced by surprise.

The views accepted at that time on the nature of a future war also had a negative effect upon the readiness and capabilities of the operational [operativnogo] rear. Thus, in the event of aggression, the border military districts (fronts) were to be prepared to support offensive operations in depth. Versions for the mobilization and deployment of the operational rear in the switch of the Soviet troops to a strategic defensive and particularly in a retreat to a significant depth were not worked out.⁴ This in turn brought about the unjustified concentration and deployment of a large amount of dumps and depots with mobilization and emergency supplies of materiel in the border military districts. As of 1 June 1941, on the territory of the five Western military districts (LenVO [Leningrad Military District], PribOVO [Baltic Special Military District], ZapOVO [Western Special Military District], KOVO [Kiev Special Military District] and OdVO [Odessa Military District]) some 340 stationary dumps and depots had been concentrated, or 41 percent of their total number.⁵ Here also was located a significant number of the central depots and dumps of Glavneftesnab [Main Petroleum Supply Directorate] and the Directorate of State Material Reserves. The unsound concentration of the dumps and depots in the border area became one of the main reasons for the great losses of materiel in the initial period of the war.

In the prewar years, little attention was paid to working out a scientifically sound theory of rear troop support, to increasing the mobility and maneuverability of the army and front rear services, to establishing a dependable control system or to ensuring the dependable security

and defense of the lines of communications. The questions of organizing command posts and deploying a system of rear communications had not been resolved.

According to the prewar views, the front rear services were to be stable with permanent dumps and depots, medical, repair and other units and facilities deployed in the areas of railroad stations to a depth of up to 500 km. The front dumps were to keep significant supplies of materiel: up to 8-10 units of fire of ammunition, 10 fuel loads and 30 daily rations of food and grain fodder.⁶

Each army was assigned a rear area with an independent rail section. Here they established the army regulating station, the main army railhead and the railheads of the rifle corps. In the area of the railheads were located up to 20-25 army dumps with all types of supplies.⁷

The large amount of dumps, depots and other permanent facilities in the fronts and armies tethered the rear services to the railroads and made them very cumbersome, unable to maneuver flexibly their forces, to promptly move behind the troops and provide them the required logistic aid.

The situation was complicated by the fact that the mobilizational deployment of the operational [operativnovo] rear was planned for the second stage after the mobilizing of the combat formations and units. The times for the mobilizational deployment of the rear services were unjustifiably drawn out: up to 7 days for the army and up to 15 days for the front. With the extremely limited capabilities of the organic rear services (even in the regular formations and units, these were only 20-25 percent up to strength), this inevitably was to negatively effect and did effect the troop support.

There was virtually no headquarters body for the operational [operativnovo] rear services. Both on a front (Diagram 1) and in an army, control and command were decentralized. In the fronts (military districts) and armies, the combined-arms staffs directed and coordinated the actions of the numerous supply and support services. Rear sectors were organized for carrying out these tasks in them. Their chiefs were the deputy chiefs of the combined-arms staffs and were responsible for organizing the rear services and planning logistic support for the troops. Their immediate leadership of the supply and logistic support of the troops (artillery, motor vehicle and armored, engineer, quartermaster and so forth) was carried out by the appropriate chiefs of the combat arms and services subordinate to the front (army) commander.

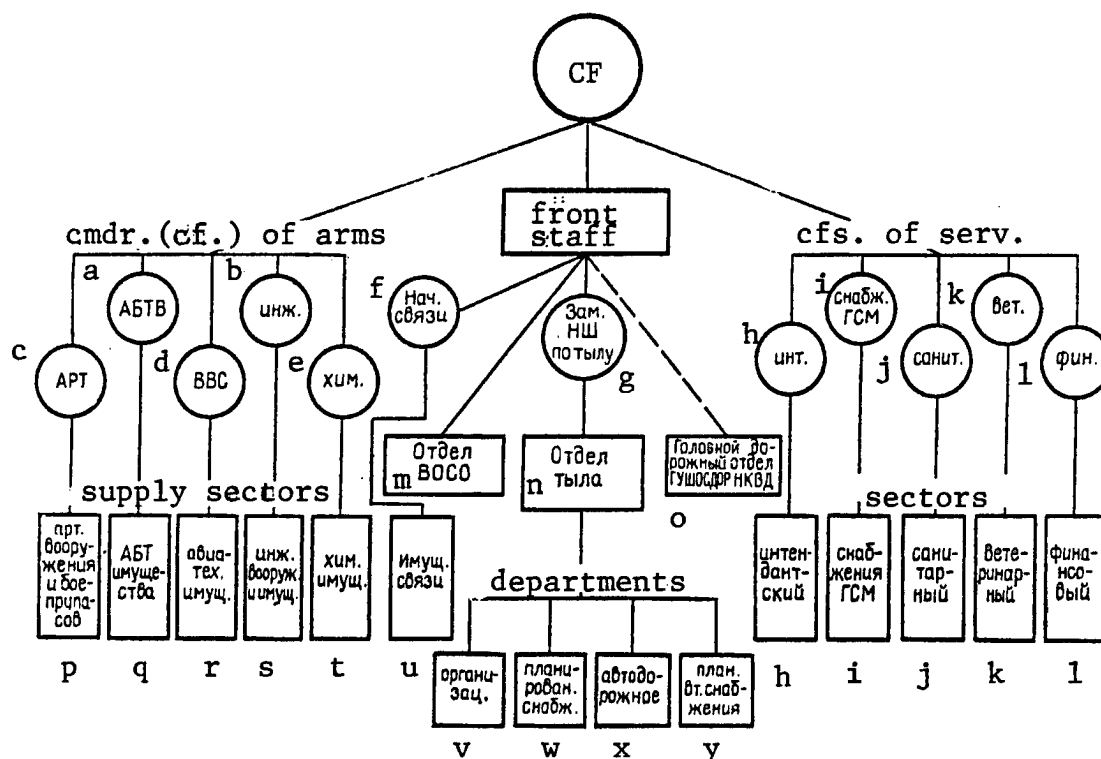


Diagram 1. Headquarters Bodies of Front Rear Services in Initial Period of War

Key:

a—Motor vehicle-armored

b—Engineer

c—Artillery

d—Air forces

e—Chemical

f—Signals chief

g—Deputy chief of staff for rear services

h—Quartermaster

i—Fuel and lubricants supply

j—Medical

k—Veterinary

l—Financial

m—VOSO sector

n—Rear services sector

o—Head road sector of Main Directorate of Highways and Roadsof the NKVD [People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs]

p—Artillery weapons and ammunition

q—Motor vehicle and armored supply

r—Aviation technical supply

s—Engineer weapons and supply

t—Chemical supply

u—Signals supply

v—Organization

w—Supply planning

x—Motor vehicle road

y—Supply planning

Leadership over rail and water movements as well as work to rebuild and protect the railroads was assigned to the military communications (VOSO) sector which was part of the front (army) combined-arms staff. Motor roads and the delivery of materiel by motor and cart transport were the responsibility of the departments of the motor road service of the rear services sectors of the combined-arms staffs.

Such a decentralized structure of the headquarters bodies was caused by the fact that in a maneuvering war only the combined-arms staffs could keep up with the dynamic, abruptly changing situation and only they could correctly organize the rear services and effectively

direct their work in supporting the troops. The commenced war did not confirm this assumption. Even during the first days of fighting, the decentralized structure of the rear headquarters bodies did not withstand the harsh testing and it had to be immediately and fundamentally reorganized.

Mobilization and deployment of the operational [operativno] rear. The initial period of the Great Patriotic War brought the Soviet Army harsh testing. The treacherous attack by the Nazi aggressors and the extremely unsuccessful start of hostilities for the Soviet troops prevented the planned deployment of the operational [operativno] rear. Mobilization, moving up and deployment of

the formations, units and rear facilities had to be carried out in the course of heavy defensive engagements, under conditions of the retreat of our troops and losses of a significant portion of the territory, the lines of communications, human and material resources. The fronts and armies were forced to deflect the blows of the Nazi troops with extremely limited mobile supplies of materiel and underequipping of the motor vehicle, road, medical, veterinary and other units and facilities. A sharp disproportion arose between the needs of the fighting troops and the real capabilities of the rear.

In accord with the prewar plans, mobilization and deployment of the front and army rear were to be carried out on the basis of the peacetime district rear units and facilities. As can be seen from the Table, by the start of

the war the border military districts had a significant amount of permanent dumps, transport, medical and other special units and facilities. With time available for carrying out the mobilization measures in the threatening period, they would have allowed the prompt deployment of the operational [operativnovo] rear in full strength. However, the treacherous attack by the Nazi invaders thwarted the planned mobilization and deployment. In line with the rapid advance of the enemy assault groupings into the interior of Soviet territory, fundamental changes had to be made in the prewar mobilization plans, new areas had to be designated for the mobilizing of the units and facilities, and the human and material resources had to be quickly reallocated. This lengthened the time required to bring the rear facilities and units to a state of readiness and sometimes even completely thwarted their mobilization.

Table: Strength of Rear Services in Border Military Districts by Start of War*

Rear Services, Formations, Units and Facilities	Military Districts					Total	Note
	LenVO	PribOVO	ZapOVO	KOVO	OdVO		
Transport							
Special rail corps	—	—	—	1	—	1	
Railroad brigades	1	1	2	6	—	10	Reg.
Separate railroad regiments and battalions	—	—	—	1	1	2	
Motor vehicle regiments	2	—	3	3	1	9	
Motor vehicle battalions	2	4	—	—	—	6	
Motor transport depots	3	—	—	1	4	8	
Road operating regiments	4	3	6	7	4	24	Reg.
Artillery Supply							
Ammunition dumps	11	8	13	19	6	57	
Weapons dumps	1	2	1	1	—	5	
Fuel Supply							
Fuel distribution depots	—	2	—	2	—	4	
Dumps	28	18	41	42	9	138	
Laboratories	1	—	1	1	—	3	
Repair shops	1	1	—	1	—	3	
Quartermaster							
Food dumps	12	7	16	16	6	57	
Refrigeration facilities	—	—	1	—	—	1	
Bakeries	1	—	1	1	—	3	
Clothing dumps	3	2	5	4	2	16	
Shops	1	1	—	1	—	3	
Medical							
Hospitals	10	9	26	17	7	69	
Dumps	3	4	1	5	1	14	
Sanitary-epidemiological laboratories	1	1	4	4	2	12	
Dental technician labs	1	—	—	—	—	1	
Veterinary							
Hospitals	1	1	2	2	1	7	
Dumps	1	1	4	2	1	9	
Laboratories	—	1	2	2	1	6	

* The table was compiled from materials of the TsAMO [Central Archives of the USSR Ministry of Defense], folio 117, inv. 13113, file 4, sheets 96, 104-106; folio 131, inv. 13115, file 4, sheets 85-86, 118-136, 141-151; folio 133, inv. 13117, file 4, sheets 58-72; folio 138, inv. 13120, file 3, sheets 102-106, 127-152; folio 140, inv. 13123, file 4, sheets 58, 74-100.

According to the data of the Directorate for the Organization of Rear Services and Supply of the General Staff, on 5 July they did not succeed in mobilizing 68 head dumps, 20 railhead service battalions, 3 hospital headquarters, 7 headquarters for mobile evacuation points (UPEP), 34 mobile field hospitals and a whole series of other special units and facilities.⁸

In line with the rapid advance of the enemy to the east, a significant amount of materiel had to be abandoned or destroyed. On the Western Front alone, during the first week of hostilities (from 22 through 29 June), 10 artillery dumps were lost and this was over 25,000 railway carloads of ammunition (30 percent of all supplies), 25 dumps and depots storing more than 50,000 tons (50 percent) of the fuel, 14 dumps with almost 40,000 tons (50 percent) of food and fodder and a large amount of other material resources.⁹

The fronts and armies had to conduct intense fighting with a limited number of rear units and facilities and at times even without them. Thus, on 8 July 1941, the Military Council of the 8th Army (commander, Lt Gen F.S. Ivanov; military council member, Div Commissar I.F. Chukhnov; and chief of staff, Maj Gen G.A. Lariov) reported to the Military Council of the Northwestern Front: "The army has no rear facilities and service units, and the dirt roads have not been maintained due to the absence of road units."¹⁰ No better situation had developed in the armies of the Western and Southwestern Fronts. For example, the 26th Army (commander, Lt Gen F.Ya. Kostenko; military council member, Brig Commissar D.Ye. Kolesnikov) of the Southwestern Front entered into battle having just one motor transport battalion with 45 vehicles and 1 hospital.¹¹ As of 28 June 1941, the Southern Front had just 280 motor vehicles in the motor transport units.

In the aims of more dependable troop support and accelerating the deployment of the rear services, the fronts and armies received the district and central dumps, depots, units and facilities located in their rear areas. For example, on 24 June 1941, upon the order of the people's commissar of defense, the Southwestern Front received over 60 different district rear units and facilities, including 16 hospitals, 8 veterinary hospitals and 9 various dumps with material supplies.¹²

Upon orders of the chief of the General Staff, the fronts also received the dumps, depots and refrigeration facilities of the Directorate of State Reserves, Glavneftesnab and the People's Commissariat of the Meat and Dairy Industry located in their rear areas.¹³ Those of them positioned closer to the state frontier, including a portion of the district dumps, were turned over to the armies and used for troop support. For example, by the Directorate for Rear Services of the Southwestern Front of 30 June 1941, the 5th Army received the artillery dumps with ammunition supplies in Ovruch and Korosten, fuel in Ovruch, Korosten and Novograd-Volynskiy; the 6th Army received the artillery dumps in Shepetovka,

Chudnove-Volynskiy, Mikhaylenki and Berezovka, the fuel dump in Shepetovka, Khromin and Zhitomir, and the food dumps in Shepetovka and Zhitomir.¹⁴

The high intensity of combat and the abrupt changes in the operational [operativno] situation on the fronts required particularly clear and coordinated work by the supply and support services. But the absence of a centralized headquarters body for the services told negatively on the entire system of troop support. The combined-arms staffs overloaded with operational work were unable to ensure firm leadership of the rear services. For example, the Order of the Commander of the Southwestern Front of 2 July 1941 stated: "...The staffs of the divisions, corps and armies are not paying proper attention to the questions of organizing the rear services and are controlling them very badly. Constant contact is not being maintained with the inferior staffs and rear services, there is no accurate accounting of the rear units and material supplies in the troops and at the dumps, there is no accounting of the expenditure of materiel or the losses of personnel and draft animals or materiel."¹⁵

For these reasons, even during the first days of fighting, interruptions occurred and even breakdowns in logistic support for the troops. Thus, on 23-24 June 1941, with the launching of a counterstrike by the Western Front against the Suvalki Nazi grouping, the VI and XI Mechanized Corps remained without fuel (consumed in the course of a march) and ammunition at the very peak of the fighting.¹⁶ Due to a lack of fuel, the 28th Tank Division of the Northwestern Front was unable to participate in a counterthrust on 23 June 1941. Interruptions in transport led to a situation where in the 3d and 10th Armies of the Western Front from 26 June, an acute shortage arose in ammunition, fuel and food.¹⁷ Unsteadiness and breakdowns in logistic support of the troops also occurred during this period on the Southwestern and Southern Fronts.

A paradoxical situation came into being: large supplies of all types of materiel were stored at the dumps and depots in the rear areas of the fronts and armies but due to inefficiency, disorganization and a lack of communications, the troops did not know of this and experienced an acute shortage of ammunition, fuel, food and supplies.

The Chief Quartermaster of the Red Army, Lt Gen Intend Serv A.V. Khrulev, on 30 June 1941, reported to the Chief of the General Staff, Army Gen G.K. Zhukov: "The question of organizing the rear service of the operational [deystvuyushchiy] army is in an exceptionally difficult state. Neither myself, as the Chief Quartermaster, nor the Directorate of Rear Services and Supply of the General Staff as of today have had any information on the supply of food and quartermaster property of the fronts.... There is no transport as the Chief Quartermaster Directorate has no data as to where how much could and should be delivered."¹⁸

The situation required a decisive strengthening of leadership over troop support and supply. At the beginning of July, the people's commissar of defense instructed the Chief Quartermaster of the Red Army to prepare proposals to improve the rear command and control system. On 30 July, the People's Commissar of Defense, I.V. Stalin, confirmed the regulation "On the Command and Control of the Red Army Rear Services in Wartime" and on 1 August signed orders for organizing central and front (army) rear services headquarters bodies. Under the order at the center they established the Main Directorate of Rear Services and in the

fronts and armies (Diagram 2), directorates headed by the chief of the rear services and deputy commander with all the main rear services subordinate directly to him.¹⁹ Appointed to the positions of chiefs of the front rear services were well-regarded professional military leaders with great experience in troop leadership. These included: Lt Gens V.K. Mordvinov (Northern Front), M.G. Snegov (Northwestern Front), V.N. Kurdyumov (Western Front), M.S. Khozin (Reserve Front), I.G. Sovetnikov (Southwestern Front), M.A. Reyter (Bryansk Front) and I.K. Smirnov (Southern Front).

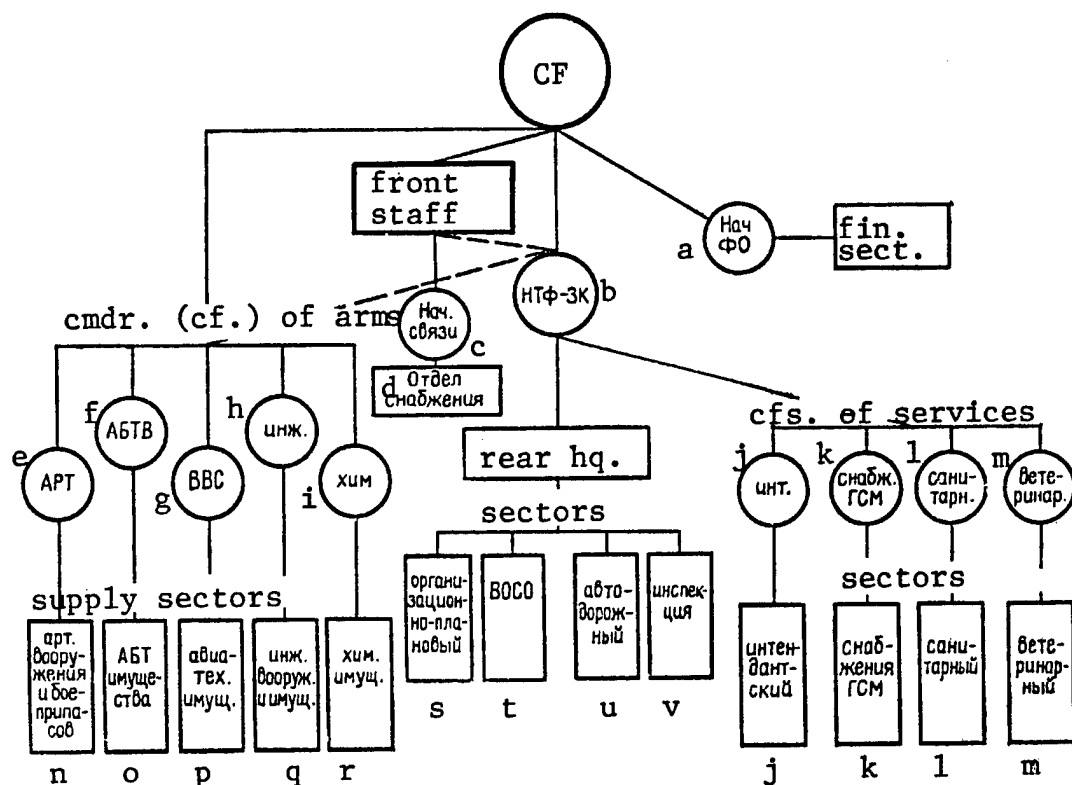


Diagram 2. Headquarters Bodies of Front Rear Services After Their Reorganization (As of 1 August 1941)

Key:

a—Chief of financial sector

b=Chief of front rear services and deputy commander

c—Signals chief

d—Supply sector

e—Artillery

f—Motor vehicle armored

g—Air forces

ii—Engineer
i—Chemical

i—Quartermaster

k—Fuel and lubricant supply

1—Medical

m—Veterinary

n—Artillery weapons and ammunition

o—Motor vehicle and armored supply

p—Aviation technical supply

q—Engineer weapons and supply

q—Engineer weapons
r—Chemical supply

s—Organization-planning

s—Organic
t—VOSO

u=Motor road

u—Motor road
v—Inspectorate

The people's commissar of defense viewed the organization of rear support for the fronts as **an exceptionally important operational [operativnovo] job inseparably linked with the preparation and conduct of combat.** In appointing the first chiefs of the front rear services, he pointed out: "War demands iron order in troop supply. This order must be instilled by a firm hand of the rear services chiefs of the fronts and armies. You must be dictators in the rear area of your fronts and each person must understand this well."²⁰

The centralizing of command and control of the rear services more fully met the conditions of the commenced war and made it possible to more effectively resolve the questions of organizing logistic support for the troops, the preparing of the lines of communications, delivery and evacuation, the organizing of security and defense as well as the maintaining of order in the assigned areas. Leadership over the operational [operativnovo] rear was substantially strengthened. Later on, in April 1942, the Chief of the Red Army Rear Services, Army Gen A.V. Khrulev, reported to the people's commissar of defense: "Ten months of experience has shown that the directorates of the front and army rear services as constituted have been viable and have generally proved their purpose. The rear services chiefs of the fronts and armies in actuality are full deputy commanders for the rear services and, in possessing full authority, are the sole persons responsible for all the questions of the rear services."²¹

The centralized structure set up at the beginning of the war for the headquarters bodies of the operational [operativnovo] rear subsequently continued to be improved and strengthened. Thus, in August 1941, political sectors of the rear services were established in the fronts and armies. In November 1941, the VKP(b) [All-Union Communist Party (Bolshevik)] Central Committee approved a decree to appoint one of the members of the front and army military councils as responsible for troop supply. Appointed as military council members, as a rule, were prominent party and economic leaders from those oblasts and republics where the troops of the fronts (armies) were fighting. Later, in May 1942, rear staffs were organized in the fronts and armies instead of the planning organizational sectors.²²

The organization and establishment measures strengthened the rear services command system for the fronts and armies and substantially increased the effectiveness of leadership over rear troop supply. This was also aided by the improved strength of the operational [operativnovo] rear and its increased technical equipping, mobility and flexibility. Thus, in August 1941, upon a decision of the NKO [People's Commissariat of Defense], the number of permanent dumps, depots, shops and other cumbersome facilities was reduced in the fronts and armies. In their place field mobile dumps were established. The structure was improved and the maneuverability increased of the road, railroad, motor vehicle troops, the medical and other units and facilities. Instead

of 20-25 cumbersome dumps, the armies had field army depots consisting of 7-8 mobile dumps for the basic types of supply.²³ At the same time, there was a revision and significant reduction in supplies at the front and army dumps. According to the new standards, at the front (army) field dumps they were to maintain: for ammunition 1 (0.75) units of fire, for fuel 2 (1) loads and for food 15 (5) daily rations.²⁴

At the same time, the bodies of the Center, the military districts, fronts and armies initiated additional measures to accelerate the mobilizing and constituting of the motor vehicle, road and railroad formations and units, the medical, veterinary and repair facilities. A significant amount of motor transport was mobilized for their supply in the interior military districts. The basic portion of the vehicles was sent to the assembly areas by train without drivers and fuel. Upon arrival at the destination which was frequently changed, the trains carrying the vehicles stood idle and often came under enemy air and tank attack. This impeded the organization of the troops and rear facilities. By the end of the first month of the war, the Center had been able to constitute only 5 motor vehicle brigades and several separate motor transport regiments and battalions.²⁵ On the Northwestern Front, by mid-July, they had been able to mobilize just one separate road maintenance battalion, one road building battalion and a bridge building battalion.

The organizing of separate mobile rear units and facilities in the fronts and armies somewhat strengthened the operational [operativnovo] rear and increased its capabilities and maneuverability. The rear services control bodies could more quickly maneuver the forces and their cooperation was improved and strengthened with the combined-arms staffs, the air force commanders, the chiefs of the combat arms and special troops and services. However, in the initial period of the war, it was not possible to completely resolve the problem of the mobilization and deployment of the operational rear. The constituting and moving up of the rear formations, units and facilities of the fronts and armies in the internal military districts continued until the start of 1942.

Certain lessons and conclusions. The military operations [deystviya] which started by surprise placed high demands on the combat readiness of the operational [operativnovo] rear. The poorly equipped organic rear which existed in the prewar years even during the first days of the war could not supply the troops continuously. The plans of an ordered mobilization and deployment of the army and front rear services during the threatening period were not confirmed. Interruptions arose in the supply of troops with materiel.

The errors committed in preparing the operational [operativnovo] rear persuasively showed that the minimum necessary number of units and facilities in the army and front rear must be readied for war while in peacetime.

Their strength, technical equipping and combat readiness should conform fully to the combat readiness and tasks of the troop groups being supported. In terms of their mobility, maneuverability and productivity they should be capable of immediately deploying and beginning uninterrupted troop support. The headquarters bodies of the operational [operativnovo] rear services should provide efficient use of these units and facilities from the very first days of combat.

One of the important tasks in the early readying of the operational [operativnovo] rear is the careful elaboration of a scientifically sound theory of troop rear support in the operations [operatsiya] of the initial period of a war. This theory should proceed from the fundamental qualitative changes in the weaponry and technical arming of the troops and from the most complicated variations of the possible initiation of a war by the aggressor and the conduct by the fronts of intense defensive operations [operatsiya] to repel the enemy invasion with the subsequent going over to a decisive counteroffensive. For this reason all the basic questions of the preparation and configuration of the operational [operativnovo] rear should be settled comprehensively so that with the shifting of the troops from the defensive to the counteroffensive major regroupings of the forces need not be carried out for the sectors and lines of the troops. This can be achieved by the deeper (to the entire depth of the operational [operativnovo] configuration of the troop groupings) and dispersed placement of the dumps and depots with material supplies, by preparing an extensive and dependable network of lines of communications as well as by further increasing the mobility of the motor vehicle, road, railroad, medical, repair and other rear units and facilities. Their organizational structure and technical equipping should be brought as close as possible to wartime needs.

The last war provided an instructive lesson on the questions of preparing and organizing the command of the operational [operativnovo] rear. The decentralized and poorly prepared headquarters bodies could not provide firm leadership over the rear support of the troops in the complex and rapidly changing situation. The centralized and stable rear services command system had to be prepared ahead of time, in peacetime, and it had to be constantly strengthened and improved so that it could immediately assume command and effectively lead all the rear services, troops and facilities with any variation of the aggressor's initiation of the war. There will be neither time nor any opportunity to reorganize and reready the system in the initial period of a modern war.

Footnotes

1. V.I. Lenin, PSS [Complete Collected Works], Vol 35, p 408.

2. "Istoriya vtoroy mirovoy voyny 1939-1945" [History of World War II of 1939-1945], Moscow, Voenizdat, Vol 3, 1974, p 388.

3. "1941 god—uroki i vyvody" [The Year 1941—Lessons and Conclusions], Leningrad, Izd. Voennoy Akademii Tyla i Transporta, p 12.

4. Ibid., p 15.

5. "Tyl Sovetskoy Armii v Velikoy Otechestvennoy voyne 1941-1945 gg." [Rear Services of the Soviet Army in the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945], Leningrad, Izd. Voennoy Akademii Tyla i Transporta, Part 1, 1963, pp 20-21.

6. "Ustav tyla Krasnoy Armii: Proyekt" [Manual of Red Army Rear Services: Draft], Moscow, Voenizdat, Part 2, 1941, p 29.

7. Ibid., pp 12-13.

8. "Tyl Sovetskoy Armii....," Part 2, 1963, p 13.

9. TsAMO SSSR [Central Archives of the USSR Ministry of Defense], folio 208, inv. 14703, file 1, sheet 36; inv. 2454, file 27, sheet 152.

10. "Tyl Sovetskoy Armii....," Part 2, p 488.

11. TsAMO, folio 217, inv. 12963, file 18, sheets 78-79.

12. Ibid., folio 229, inv. 118, file 7, sheets 9-11.

13. Ibid., folio 221, inv. 1372, file 1, sheets 93-100.

14. Ibid., folio 229, inv. 178, file 7, sheet 26.

15. Ibid., file 21, sheet 68.

16. "Istoriya vtoroy mirovoy....," Vol 4, 1975, p 40.

17. TsAMO, folio 208, inv. 2454, file 22, sheet 566; inv. 3038, file 15, sheets 10-12.

18. "Tyl Sovetskoy Armii....," Part 2, p 18.

19. TsAMO, folio 67, inv. 5890, file 2, sheets 14-19.

20. Ibid., inv. 12022, file 84, sheet 80.

21. Ibid., sheet 81.

22. Ibid., folio 56, inv. 12022, file 4, sheet 82.

23. Ibid., inv. 264796, file 110, sheets 9-11.

24. Ibid., folio 208, inv. 2563, file 7, sheets 139-140.

25. VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL, No 10, 1973, p 32.

Night Operations of Frontal Aviation
*00010036d Moscow VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY
ZHURNAL in Russian
No 6, June 88 (signed to press 20 May 88) pp 28-33*

[Article, published under the heading "Soviet Military Art," by Col A.G. Pervov, candidate of historical sciences, and Lt Col V.N. Guskov, candidate of historical sciences: "Night Operations [deystviya] of Frontal Aviation"; the article was written from the experience of the Great Patriotic War]

[Text] By the start of the Great Patriotic War, the state of readiness of frontal aviation formations and units for night operations [deystviya] did not meet the requirements of the times. The bombers and attack planes in service did not have special sight and navigation equipment and the fighters lacked devices to detect air targets. Night flying time in the regiments in 1939 was 3.9 percent of the total number of hours spent on combat training and in 1940, around 5 percent.¹ On 1 June 1941, a total of 1,062 pilots in the air forces of the border military districts were able to fly at night under visual flight conditions, 44 under instrument conditions and just 4 pilots on the new types of aircraft.² Here the flight personnel was basically concerned with developing piloting techniques and only extremely rarely with combat employment.

However, the situation developing on the Soviet-German Front required wide-scale employment of frontal aviation. This was caused by the conduct of systematic night actions by the Soviet troops and by the going over to the offensive, as a rule, in the early morning, as well as by the enemy's maneuvering of reserves and regrouping of troops and combat equipment in darkness. An important factor was also the desire of our command to reduce bomber and attack plane losses from the Nazi fighters and increase the probability of their crossing the enemy ground air defenses.

Of the frontal aviation, the night light bomber aviation (NLBA) conducted combat most actively and was armed with the U-2 aircraft (in 1944, renamed the Po-2), as well as the R-5 and R-Z. Proving best was the U-2 which had been produced by industry since 1927. It excelled in flight qualities, simplicity in operation and inexpensive production, and could carry a payload of up to 300 kg. With the aim of widening the capability of carrying out combat missions, a more powerful engine and additional fuel tanks began to be mounted on it. From October through December 1941, 71 night bomber air regiments (nbap) were organized in the Air Forces using the U-2 aircraft, 27 with the R-5 and 5 with the P-Z.³ From the summer of the following year, they began to be organized in divisions (nbad). Each air army included one or more rarely two nbad. The flight personnel was trained for night operations [deystviya] at air schools and in reserve air units. This was carried out under both general and specially worked out programs.

The pilots of the 46th nbap (commander, Maj Ye.D. Bershanskaya) fought bravely for the motherland. This was the world's first air unit the personnel of which from the moment of constituting to the end of the war was completely staffed by women. The regiment which was constituted in February 1942 by 27 May had already arrived on the front as part of the 218th Air Division (commander, Col D.D. Popov). Having begun its campaign record in the Northern Caucasus, it reached Berlin. The female crews on the U-2 conducted air reconnaissance and launched crushing strikes against the enemy, destroying personnel and combat equipment as well as crossings and defensive structures. Over the 3 years, the courageous female pilots made around 24,000 aircraft sorties and dropped a large amount of bombs on the enemy.

Of all the combat missions carried out by frontal aviation at night, the aviation softening up for the attack and air support of the advancing troops were the most important. For carrying these out, formations and units of the NLBA were employed. In terms of the nature of operations [deystviya] and the time of execution, the air softening up for the assault was divided, as in daylight, into preliminary and direct. The former was rarely planned and chiefly when in the enemy defenses there were strong engineer structures (Vyborg and Konigsberg Operations [operatsii]). For example, before the storming of the Konigsberg Fortress, the night light bombers of the 1st and 3d Air Armies (commanders, Gens T.T. Khryukin and N.F. Papivin) over a period of 2 nights of 4 and 5 April 1945 launched around 500 aircraft sorties in the aim of destroying the forts and key strongpoints.⁴ The preliminary air softening up for the assault usually was carried out along a broad front 24 hours and more prior to the start of the operation [operatsiya] in order to conceal the plan and axis of the main thrust. The depth of bomber operations [deystviya] here was 5-10 km from the combat contact line and this was determined by the locating of the main Nazi forces and defensive fortifications in the designated zone.

The direct air softening up for the assault was aimed at establishing good conditions for the ground troops to go over to the offensive (the neutralizing of enemy personnel and weapons on the breakthrough sectors, the destruction of centers of resistance and strongpoints and the disrupting of the command and control system). This was conducted, as a rule, before the artillery softening up and sometimes together with it. For example, in the Berlin Operation [operatsiya] more than 150 night bombers from the 16th and 4th Air Armies (commanders, Gens S.I. Rudenko and K.A. Vershinin) launched attacks in the zone of the First Belorussian Front from 0300 hours on 16 April 1945 simultaneously with the artillery fire some 20-25 minutes prior to the start of the offensive, having made 550 aircraft sorties.⁵ The pilots bombed the staffs and signals centers on the first and second defensive zones while the artillery troops fired at nearby targets.